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INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [UNGA](#) [GT](#) [VE](#) [MR](#)
SUBJECT: VENEZUELA TRIES TO WOO MAURITANIA

Classified By: CDA STEVEN KOUTSIS, REASONS 1.4 (b),(d)

¶1. (U) Junta leader Col. Vall received Venezuelan Ministry of Energy and Petroleum Director of International Relations Ivan Orellana-Alcala on August 16 in Nouakchott. Described in the press as "Special Envoy" of Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez, Orellana was reportedly welcomed on his arrival in Nouakchott by Minister of Water and Acting Minister of Energy and Petroleum Ely Ould Ahmedou. Following his meeting with Vall, Orellana is reported to say he "came to express the solidarity of Venezuela with the Mauritanian people and to firm up the friendship that exists between (Venezuela) and Africa." He added that he "raised with the Chief of State issues concerning cooperation between the two countries in the matters of oil, commerce, etc."

¶2. (C) According to MFA Secretary General Mohamed Lemine Ould Moulaye Zeine, who attended the meeting, the two discussed "strengthening cooperation" between the two countries and establishing diplomatic relations. When Charge asked whether the Venezuela candidacy for the non-permanent UNSC seat was raised, he replied "a lot of things were discussed, but I was particularly struck by the offer to establish diplomatic relations."

¶3. (C) Charge reiterated USG opposition to Venezuela's candidacy, pointing out that while Mauritania is moving towards democracy, Venezuela is moving in the opposite direction. Further, as the issue involves a region close to the United States, it is being watched closely at a high level in the USG, including how countries will vote. Moulaye Zeine replied that cooperation between the two countries is not new; in 2004 Venezuela donated \$1 million to assist in locust disaster relief (Note: We have been unable to verify this.)

¶3. (C) Comment: Col. Vall is expected to attend the NAM summit in September. Moulaye Zeine's response was much more equivocal than the MFA response in March to our initial demarche. End Comment.
Koutsis